

# NI Bulletin

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## **From the Editor's Desk**

The articles by the member have been appreciated, but there is always a need for more. A number of members have been very supportive and have supplied some excellent articles. Unfortunately, there is always a need for more, and to continue to publish a full size *NI BULLETIN*, more articles are needed.

## **Note to the Members**

As your new INDEX Compiler, I want to ensure that the annual NI Bulletin Index is as useful to you as possible. I am in the process of preparing the 2004 Index, but before I submit it for publication, I would like to have some feedback from you. The arrangement of this year's Index may not suit everyone, base as it on previous examples and my own preference and best guesses. If you would like to complain, or have suggestions for improvement, or particularly like some feature and want to see it retained, please tell me so. You may contact me through the regular NI channels, or directly.

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## THE SWANSONG OF SINKIANG REPUBLICAN SILVER COINS

*David Spencer Smith NI LM-#92*

The history of Chinese silver coins is remarkably short. After two millennia of cast copper or bronze “Cash” coins all except a few very early issues bearing a square hole, the first struck silver coins were made in and for Formosa (Taiwan) from 1837 by Chang Wen, to support a revolution during the 17th year of the reign of the Emperor Tao Kuang. This “Old Man dollar” (Kann-1; C-25-3) bore the denomination “7.2 mace”, the value of all subsequent dollar-based silver coins of the Chinese provinces. Further issues from Formosa, likewise designed for “soldiers’ pay” appeared in 1853 and 1862 (Kann, 1953) bore a motif of a flower vase. Not until 1888 was the first “drago dollar” issued by the province of Kweichow, followed by a very extensive series of dollar coins with a dragon design, from many provinces, which continued until the advent of the Republic in 1912.

The westernmost province of Sinkiang did not conform to the rest of China. It was overwhelmingly Muslim and has had a long history of attempts to separate from China. Its monetary system differed from that of most of China in retaining the “tael” as a unit of coinage—the dollar or “yuan” being 72% of a tael. In 1905, Sinkiang issued a splendid tael (Kann-1008) with a dragon on the reverse and “Ration silver one tael” on the obverse (Fig. 1).



FIG. 1 - Ration silver tael of Sinkiang, minted in 1905.

Other variants were produced during the life of the Empire, and when the Republic was established, taels with appropriate flags (Kann-1250, 1251) (Fig. 2) were minted in 1912, with the same reverse as previous issues with the addition of “*First year of the Republic of China*” added. Then in 1917 and 1918 the penultimate taels (Kann-1265, 1267) (Fig. 3) with cereal and flowers around the perimeter of the reverse. The obverse of this 1918 coin bears the legend “*One tael pure silver*” at the center, and inside the rim at top: “*Made in the silver mint of Tihwa [Urumchi]*” and below: “*Seventh year of the Chinese Republic*”. The reverse uses the Turki name of the capital city: “*Minted in Urumchi*”. During the Empire, Sinkiang issues silver fractional coins, in denominations

of 5, 3, 2 and 1-misqal, but silver coinage was restricted during the Republic to taels and half-tael (5-misqal) coins.

Silver coins of 5 misqal (mace) were produced at around the same time as the above Urumchi taels, the last being dated AH 1334 (November 1916-October 1917). Communist forces appeared on the scene in early 1930s, opposing Chang kai'shek's Kuomintang (KMT). Inflation grew progressively, ultimately precipitously, and towards the end of the war, with the communists nearing success, Sinkiang printed bank notes in denominations of up to 6 billion taels (Pick, 1995 S-1797 (Dong Qingxuan and Jiang Qixiang; 1991, 623)). These last cited authors observe that in 1939, when the first Sinkiang provincial bank notes were issued, one paper tael was equal to one silver tael. They comment that in 1949 one 6 billion tael note would not even purchase a box of matches, and that one hundred such notes could not be exchanged for a silver tael.



FIG. 2 - Silver tael of Sinkiang minted in Year 1 of the Republic (1912).



FIG. 3 - Silver tael of Sinkiang minted in Year 8 of the Republic (1918).

During this dire period in Sinkiang's history, the Province's authorities decided to embark on an astonishing course to stabilize the economy: production of a silver dollar dated 1949. Apart from all else, production of a dollar coin was the first departure from the tael system for Sinkiang. For some thirty years after it was minted, this coin

was rare in the West, commanding a price of several hundred dollars. Lin and colleagues (1990) state that Sinkiang adopted the silver standard on 20 May 1949, backing the new dollar issue. Kann (1953) regarded this issue as an “essay”, and that “. . . political events and surrender of Sinkiang to the communistic regime, made the actual circulation of [this] coin superfluous.”

However, from 1980 very large numbers of Sinkiang coins, silver and copper, were smuggled out of the People’s Republic to the West, an operation that was very hazardous to the smugglers. Among these coins were substantial numbers of the 1949 dollar, far more than could substantiate Kann’s guess that they were merely essays. The market value of the coins dropped to perhaps five per-cent of the previous level. It seems likely that most coins were hoarded after a period of galloping inflation, and that few entered into circulation. The silver content of this coin was 85% according to Dong Wenchao (1992), evidently worth perhaps six hundred billion taels in the then current paper money- an asset that would be difficult to part with.

That this was planned as a major issue, not merely as an experimental “essay” is shown by analysis of dies used to strike 119 examples of the 1949 dollar, examined by DSS by courtesy of Andre de Clermont (Spink, London). These showed an extraordinarily large number of obverse and reverse dies-- respectively 25 and 26 (Esty and Smith, 2002): evidence that these coins, most of which are in near uncirculated condition though often soiled and discolored, were part of a major issue that largely vanished for over three decades. It remains uncertain where these coins were struck: Dong Wenchao suggests the provincial capital, Urumchi, though Kashgar remains a possibility.



FIG. 4 - One-dollar coin of Sinkiang, dated 1949.

Around the margin of the obverse of the coin (Fig. 4) is a Turki legend: “*Made in the Sinkiang Money-making Factory*”. At the center is the numeral “1” below which is the Turki phonetic for “dollar” and a large “1949”. On the reverse, the marginal legend is a Chinese rendering of the Turki, with a central “One Yuan” and, at the base “the 38<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic”.

The “People’s Liberation Army” entered the provincial capital Urumchi on 20 October, 1949, suggesting that these coins may have been available for at most only five months.

It is possible that the communists attempted to resurrect this coinage: in a still scarce variety (Fig. 5) the “38<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic” on the reverse is replaced by Chinese “1949”. There seems no reason why the KMT should have made this change, but if it was made by the victorious communists, it went against their monetary policy after taking power. The first Chinese communist coins were poorly designed and minted in aluminium; thereafter, China embarked on a policy of minting a vast series of silver and gold “pseudo-coins”, celebrating sporting events, pandas and so on, some the size of gold saucers.



FIG. 5 - As Fig. 4, but with “38<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic” replaced by “1949” in Chinese.

The author has, admittedly, a very jaundiced view of these objects, and looks on the Sinkiang 1949 dollar as indeed the swansong of Sinkiang coinage- the end of two millennia of “honest” Chinese coins, before the blight of the “People’s Republic” ended the coinage of the historic Empire and Republic of China.

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Figure captions (all coins slightly enlarged).

# Military Unit Coins

Francis J. Gemer

“Military Unit Coins” is a generic term for a variety of coin like items that are also referred to as: challenge coins, commanders’ coins, memorial coins, unit coins, and unit challenge coins (1). I began with the idea that it was going to be simple and a relatively short filler for NIB. However, the more information I uncovered the more complex and divergent it became. First, military unit coins are not coins but medallions (an insignificant point for many). Secondly, what I thought was exclusively a military item is not. Thirdly, what I believed was the purpose is only partially accurate. Fourthly, its origin is not securely established. And fifthly, though a legitimate object of study and collection for numismatics, it has been overlooked and/or ignored.

Having said all that, here is an overview of what I discovered, primarily through the internet (2). Essentially, most of the “coins” have primarily one goal: to develop esprit de corps. The earliest reference of an issue of coins for this purpose seems to originate with Roman generals or emperors who, either were preparing for war or having won a great victory for the Empire, would issue coins to commemorate their campaign or victory. These coins were recognized by Rome’s central government as legal currency. Where then the first commander’s coins or (military) memorial coins?

Reading of references makes it clear that there were coins associated with military themes (Fig. 1) and usage, as well as medallions with a military motif or commemoration (Fig. 2). However, it does not seem that the legionary and provincial coins by the frontier commanders also meant that the commanders issued medallions (“unit coins”) to smaller units of troops. The medal-lions were generally the product of the emperor or the local imperial mint, in the name of the emperor.



Fig. 1. (Coin) Emp. Hadrian, honoring the troops in Spain (AD 135).



Fig. 2. (Medallion) Emp. Gordian III, celebrating the Roman army crossing into Asia to fight the Persians (AD 242).

The monies that the commanders had authority to mint were to pay the troops and for needed supplies, enhance the image of the empire/emperor with the local population, make good press for the folks at home (provincial money was good all over the empire), and hopefully instill confidence into the troops.

The next legendary origin was to be in the Boer War (1899-1902). This story is more round about in that there was no actual coin or medallion struck at the start. The story goes that British enlisted men did not receive medals but the officers did. To boost the morale the Regimental Sgt. Major would sneak into the officer's tent, snip off the medal from the ribbon, and in a carefully orchestrated handshake with an enlisted man who proved himself, say to him: "good job, well done" (or something to that effect) and pass the medal on. The idea eventually evolved into a coin with the unit's crest on it. It was the unit's Senior NCO that presented these trophies, as they did not have the authority to present medals or awards (3).

Enter the classic World War I tale of the captured pilot. There are various versions but this appears to be the more common. Among the volunteers to enter the war as a pilot and fly the new war-machines was a rich lieutenant. He decided that he would create a medallion with the unit insignia and present it to each pilot in his squadron. One day he (or another in his unit) was caught over enemy lines, shot down and captured. However, he was able to escape and in his effort to evade the Germans he stole civilian clothes and worked his way back to the front. He hoped he would be able to get across the lines and rejoin his unit. At some point he did encounter friendly French forces but was again captured, by the French. That particular area had been subject to saboteur activity and as his accent was not recognized he was determined not to be French, and yet was in French civilian clothes with no official documents to verify his identity, hence he was deemed a spy or saboteur and sentenced to execution. During his final interrogation a French officer noticed the leather bag around the doomed pilot's neck, in it was the medallion with the squadron's insignia. The officer recognized it and sent it back to the unit where it was identified and the description of the missing pilot given. This was enough for the execution to be halted, and as the legend goes, the pilot was sent back to his unit with a bottle of wine. The challenge to his identity was met.

Thereafter, all members of the squadron were to carry their “coins” at all times. Whenever meeting each other they were to challenge the other to produce their “coin”. If the “coin” was not produced in 60 seconds, the challenged person was to buy drinks for the challenger for the night. If the challenge was met and the “coin” was produced, then the challenger pays for the challenged person’s drinks for the night.

Though there is a legend that challenge coins were also in existence in World War II, their origin was again different. It is said that during the war new commando units (today’s special operations units) were created but consisted of men of differing nationalities (similar to the French Foreign Legion composition). To maintain a unit’s cohesion and avoid confusion or inability to recognize each other by language alone when meeting, members were to identify one another by the coins. Other than this bit there is nothing to prove the existence of these “coins”. It is said that military unit “coins” also existed in the Korean War, but evidence is again lacking to this author.

The 1960’s saw a member of the 11th Special Forces Group taking old coins and had them stamped with a different emblem, presenting them to unit members (4). The next *recorded* and *confirmed* appearance of the military unit “coin” was in July 1969 and the Viet Nam War. The 10th Special Forces Group (SFG) has the honor of being “first” with what is now recognized as a unit “coin”. As depicted in the classic TV show “MASH”, the place to relax for most was the hooch bar. To fight off boredom and enliven the social hour, Bullet Clubs were born.

Small, elite front-line, combat hardened “grunts” would show a personalized bullet, the last bullet carried in the pocket, to be used to deny the enemy personal capture. Someone would make the challenge, “show me or buy” and the challenge was either met or not. This became too tame, so the small bullet slowly became a 20-, 40-, or 105 mm cannon shell! To put an end to this game of “mine is bigger than yours”, Col. Vernon Green of the 10th SFG designed and produced his unit “coin”.

A few other units followed suit in the ‘70’s but these generally went unnoticed for the most part until the 1980’s. A proliferation of ”coins” then began for a variety of causes and reasons. This caused official regulations and policies to be published regarding the authority to issue and types of unit “coins” that were allowed (6). Not only were military units (Fig. 3 (a), (b)) possessors but also any governmental agency, program, or office issued similar medallions. Medallions were produced to raise funds (Special Operations-Combating Terrorism, an office in the Pentagon seeking funds, which benefited the children of those operatives killed in line of duty), as keepsakes for visitors from officials (Sec. of Defense, Wm, Cohen dispensed such medallions), as personal keepsakes of membership in an organization (Fig. 4), as memorials for events (Fig. 5 (a), (b)), and for special military operations (Fig. 6 (a), (b)). One ex-Army man brought the tradition of unit identity and esprit-de-corps to a civilian school.



Fig. 3 (a) Headquarters of the Southern Region Signal Support Regiment (b) Commander's Coin, Submarine Group Ten, Kings Bay, GA



Fig. 4

Fig. 4 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association.

Fig. 5 (a) 55th ACW (USAF), 25th Anniversary of Airborne AWACS Operations (b) U.S. Military alert status during 9-11 crisis: Sept. 11, 2001

Fig. 3 (a)

(b)





Fig. 6 (a)

(b)

Fig. 6 (a) 3rd Armored Division, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 34<sup>th</sup> Armored, Operation Desert Storm. (b) Joint Task Force Bravo, U.S. and Honduras Security Forces.

Headmaster Joe Cox, of Haverford School, distributed a coin with the school crest on one side and on the reverse were figures of an older boy and a younger boy, representing the first day of school when the older classes escort the younger to their first day at school. In a speech to the Middle School, Mr. Cox stated this “coin” was to be a reminder that all are “one community” where the older are responsible to help and protect the younger students. In addition, three key words were inscribed (“Respect, Honesty, and Courage”) to highlight the virtues of the student’s adopted honor code. The students received their “coin” during a ceremony moving from middle school to upper school grades. They were commanded to carry the “coin” as a reminder of their duty as well as their membership in the school, and the challenge to succeed. Most certainly it reflected the essence of the “military unit coin”.

For the purist, the commander’s “coin” is presented only to an individual for some outstanding act contributing to the mission of the unit. Such a “coin” not only identifies the unit, with its emblem, but also would be personalized with the individual’s name on the reverse. In some units the sergeant major or other high-ranking NCO also had the honor of dispensing a commander’s “coin” (Fig. 7). Expanding the distribution to the entire unit was an attempt by some commanders to improve morale and instill a sense of identity, unity, and esprit-de-corps in each member.



Fig. 7 325th Fighter Wing, presented by the Command Chief Master Sergeant (USAF)

Just how significant can such a unit medallion be if so many receive it? General estimates of minting are usually in the 4-6,000 per issue. Over several years the total for the unit grows to larger figures as the design primarily changes with each issue.

However, due to the popularity, the estimate currently is that there are millions produced each year for the many different military and quasi-military associated organizations, associations, and offices. It is reported that 90 percent of military coins are made in two nations in Asia, China and Korea (7). There are also “coins” with unique shapes (Fig. 8). The significance to the individual holder cannot be easily understood or appreciated by those who have never been a member of a specific “brotherhood”. The meaning or value of the medallion can be very personal (8). On the other hand, what was once scarce has become a collectable and more plentiful, as well as a memento for many.



Fig. 8 Commanding General III Corps (US Army)

The military challenge “coin”, military “coin”, unit “coin”, memorial “coin”, unit challenge “coin”, or commander’s “coin” represents affiliation, support or patronage to the organization minted on the “coin”. The origin is clouded in history, in foreign lands, and within the organization of the military. The fact that military units serve overseas, have been engaged in foreign operations, at times had their “coins” (medallions) produced overseas, and carried by the members as signs of membership to others in foreign lands makes them international in many ways.

Notes:

1. The majority of coins appear to be crown size and round. They can vary from approximately 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. to 2 in., composition of brass, copper, and bronze. Some newer varieties are silver or silver-like metal and may vary in shape. Older medallions were uncolored, newer issues are of multi-colored enamel. All illustrations in this article are not to actual size, but are reduced.
2. Internet access to information gained by using any search engine requesting the item:

3. MCPOCG Vincent W. Patton, III; source for the Boer War story
4. Sgt. Chuck Wagner; Pentagram Sept 24, 2004
5. Attributed to: Roxanne Merritt, curator of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
6. AFZC-JA-AL, Information Paper listing Army Regulations and referencing other information regarding “unit coins”.
7. (Pentagram) Sept 24, 2004
8. MCPOCG Vincent W. Patton III

Sources:

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## A CONCISE MONETARY HISTORY OF CASTILE IN THE MODERN AGE REIGN OF THE CATHOLIC MONarchs

*M<sup>a</sup> del Mar ROYO MARTÍNEZ , Universidad Complutense de Madrid*

The sixteenth century is, without a doubt, one of the most interesting periods in Spanish coinage of Modern times. This century saw successively in Spain the rule of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Monarchs, Charles V, the Emperor, and his son Philip II. And it was in this Century that the Spanish coins abandoned what they still had of the Medieval to adopt all the novelties of the Modern Age. The Castilian monetary system underwent important changes during the rule of the last two mentioned kings, but its roots must unquestionably be traced back to the reign of Isabella and Ferdinand.

### Coinage In The Days Of The Catholic Monarchs (1475-1506)

When the Catholic Monarchs ascended the throne of Castile, the political and economic situation of this Kingdom was extremely difficult. The Civil Wars that had taken place during the last years of Henry IV, the brother of Isabella, when feudal disorder reached its peak, did not favour the maintenance of a healthy coinage in Castile.

The marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand in 1469 lead to the dynastic union of Castile and León with Aragón, though both kingdoms kept their respective own institutions. The Moslems continued to be present in the South of the Peninsula with the Nazari Kingdom of Granada, their last stronghold, which would finally fall in 1492.

The pieces of this period that had been struck in the days of Henry IV, completely medieval in their features, were of the poorest quality and quite often counterfeit. In order to solve these monetary problems, during the first years of their rule, Isabella and her husband, Ferdinand of Aragón, spared no effort to put an end to the state of anarchy in Castile and restore order in the Kingdom, both politically and economically, something they successfully accomplished. The monetary policy of the Catholic Monarchs was basically carried out in two different periods (1):

#### 1. (1475-1497)

During this first period the Castilian coins retained most of the characteristics of Medieval pieces, though their types began to incorporate some of the elements of the Renaissance. The Castilian money of account continued to be the famous Maravedí, but the Catholic Monarchs ordered the striking of new coins: the gold *Excelente or Castellano* (9,20 grams, 23 ¾ carats fine and a value of 880 maravedís) and the silver *Real* (3,43 grams, 930,55 millesimals and a value of 30, 31 or 31 ½ maravedíes) with several divisors.

The *Castellano* or *Excelente* (fig.1), a piece based on the *doble Moslem Dinar*, showed in the obverse the two rulers seated in their thrones in an early Renaissance style, and in the reverse two shields (that of Castile-León and that of Aragón-Sicily) surmounted by St. John the Evangelist's eagle, and surrounded by the legends, in

gothic characters:+ FERDINANDUS : ET : ELISABETH : DEI GRATIA : REX : ET : R (egina) / SUB : UMBRA : ALARUM : TUARUM : PROTEGE NOS DOMINE (“Protect us under the shadow of Thy wings”.)



Fig. 1.- Excelente o Castellano

The *half Excelente* of 4,60 grams (fig 2) was nevertheless the most popular gold piece that circulated in Castile in these first years. Its types consisted of the heads of the two sovereigns facing each other on the obverse, and a crowned shield of Castile-León on the reverse. This piece showed in the obverse legend the evangelic motto concerning the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella: QUOS : DEUS : CONIUNXIT : HOMO : NON : SEPARET (“What God has joined together, let no man put asunder”,) and on the reverse: FERDINANDUS : ET : ELIZABETH : REX : CAS(telle).

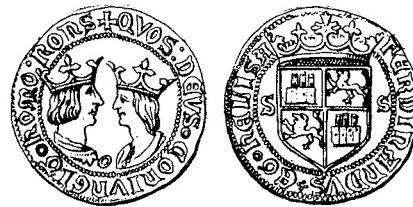


Fig. 2.- Half Excelente

The types of the silver basic piece, the *Real* (fig.3) were two shields: on the obverse that of Castile-León with St. John’s eagle, and on the reverse that of Aragón-Sicilia, crowned, both surrounded by the legend: FERNANDUS : ET : Elisabeth: RE(ges) / DOMINUS : MICHI : AUDITOR : ET : NON : TIM(ebo).

As for the billon, at the beginning Isabella and Ferdinand decided not to strike any new coin but to reuse the coins struck in the last years of Henry IV, the so called “*Blanca*,” of the Rhombus” (fig. 4).

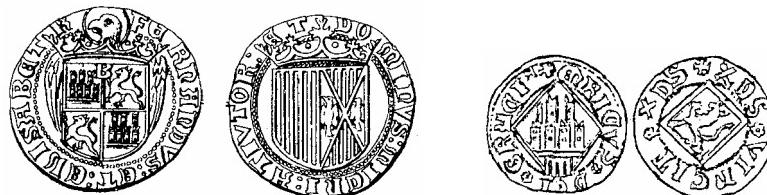


Fig. 3.- Real

Fig. 4.- Blanca “of Rhombus” of Henry IV

While in Castile these were basically the three coins in use, in the rest of Europe there circulated in those same years a piece of gold totally different from that of Castile. It was the well known *Ducat*, struck for the first time in the Republic of Venice in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century (2). It had the same fineness as the Castilian *Excelente*, but a much lighter weight (3,52 grams). As a result of the difference in weight between both pieces, during the first years of the Catholic Monarchs' rule the Castilian gold coins began to leave the Spanish Peninsula to be taken to European countries such as France. To avoid it, Isabella and Ferdinand decided to undertake a monetary reform, thus beginning the Second period of their monetary policy.

## 2. (1497-1506)

The second monetary period of the Catholic Monarchs was preceded by two events of paramount importance for the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella: The discovery of America and the expulsion of the Moors with the Conquest of Granada in 1492. In that very year Isabella and Ferdinand decided to modify the monetary system of Castile and to incorporate the new trends of the Modern Age.

The important monetary reform carried out by the Catholic Monarchs began with the ordinance known as the *Pragmatic of Medina del Campo of 13 June 1497* by which the old *Excelente* was replaced by new gold piece similar to the European *Ducado*: the *Excelente de la Granada* or Spanish *Ducado*, with a value of 375 maravedís (fig. 5). Its name was an allusion to its good quality (916,6 millesimals) and to the fact that on its reverse, inside a shield with the quartered arms of Castile-León and Aragón-Sicily, it showed a small pomegranate, the symbol of the conquest of Granada in 1492, which put an end to the Moorish rule in the Peninsula. Its legend was similar to that appearing in the previous half Excelente of 1475 (QUOS DEUS: CONIUNXIT...).

The silver coin –the *Real* (fig. 6)—kept its name, weight and fineness, but its value changed now to 34 maravedis. The piece reproduced now on the obverse another crowned shield with the arms of Castile-León and Aragón-Sicily, but the type on the reverse consisted of a yoke (Ferdinand's symbol) and a bundle of arrows (that of Isabella).

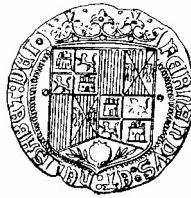


Fig. 5.- Excelente de la granada o Ducado

Fig. 6.- Real

As for the “billon coin”, the Pragmatic ordered the striking, at last, of the first piece bearing the names of the Catholic Monarchs. This piece was called *Blanca*, like those of the day of Henry IV, but its finesse (24,3 millesimals), weight (1,19 grams), types and value (1/2 maravedí) were completely different and it showed the initials F and Y, of Ferdinand and Isabella (fig. 7).



Fig. 7.- Blanca

With the creation of the *Excelente de la Granada*, the extraction from Spain of the Castilian gold coins to be taken to other European countries ceased for some time at the beginning of the XVI century, only to reappear some years later with the ascent to the throne of the Emperor Charles V.

When Queen Isabella died in 1504, the right to the throne fell to her daughter Joanna, who by the time was known as "Joanna the Mad Woman". However, since she was in the Low Countries with her husband Philip the Handsome (the son of the Emperor Maximilian of Austria), her father Ferdinand the Catholic took charge of the government of Castile until the new sovereigns came to Spain. This was his First Regency. When in 1505 Joanna and Philip finally arrived in Castile, Ferdinand renounced his Regency. But the early death of the consort king, Philip the Handsome, a few months later and the mental alienation of Joanna following her husband's death, forced Ferdinand to assume the Second Regency, which would last until his death in 1516.

In the ten years of Ferdinand's Regencies, the Castilian coins did not undergo any important change, but continued to be issued with the same characteristic as those issued after the *Pragmatic of 1497*.

#### Notes

- (1) For this Spanish monetary period see: Anna M<sup>a</sup> BALAGUER, *The history of coinage during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs*, Rev. Numisma, N° 233 (1939, Madrid, pp.93-154).
- (2) The gold Ducat, born in the Republic of Venice in 1284 and introduced in the Kingdom of Aragón in the XIV century, had, thus, been issued by Ferdinand the Catholic himself, before marrying Isabella, in his own kingdom of Aragón.

## ARUBA NUMISMATIC MUSEUM

### A HIDDEN NUMISMATIC GEM IN THE CARRIBEAN

On our last cruise in October 2004, through the Panama Canal, our ship, the Norwegian Sun, made a stop at Aruba. I was aware of a numismatic museum in Aruba from a previous cruise in 2000. At that time the Aruba Numismatic Museum was closed and I did not get to see their coins. This time I had plenty of time to tour this small but attractive museum. The museum is located only two blocks from the cruise line docks. It is in the heart of downtown.

Their hours are: Mon - Thu: 9AM - 4PM, and Fri: 9AM - 1PM, Sat: 9AM - 12AM

The Aruba Numismatica Museo (Numismatic Museum) was established on November 13, 1981 and lodges the private collection of Mr. Juan Mario Odor and is the first numismatic museum established on Aruba. Mr. Odor died in 2002 and the museum is now under the directorship of his granddaughter, Desiree Croes. This is a family affair. The museum Numismatist is Ruben Odor and the Curator is Ines Odor. The admission is \$5.00, but this includes a large 37mm bronze medal commemorating the visit of the Netherlands Royal family in February 1987.

The museum contains over 40.000 different pieces covering over 400 countries. This fantastic museum contains over 110 different collections on their own, for example: primitive, strange, zoo, proof, counter stamp, over struck, mini, chop-coins, errors, leprosarium, gold, ration, F.A.O. dollars & crowns, commemoratives, center holed, scalloped, square, wooden-coins, tokens, medals, food-coupons and much more.



Medal provided by museum as part of the admission. Obverse



Reverse



Typical wall the museum display



The outside of museum

What should you expect when you visit the Numismatic Museum - Money Museum Aruba?

First you will be welcomed at the front door by a *numismatist / money collector* and also your tour guide. In our case the guide was Mrs. Raquel Maduro-Odor (she is also the daughter and president of the "Juan Mario Odor Foundation") and Desiree's

mother. Make sure you have at least 30 minutes to hear about Aruba's history thru monetary development.

In the first room you will get information about the present and the consequences of the "Separate Status" (separation from the Netherlands Antilles) that Aruba gained in 1986. From the artist that designed our money until the latest minted proof commemorative coins. In this room you will also learn about the family tradition of coin collectors in Aruba and about the founder, Juan Mario Odor.

This room also housed an assortment of displays, I found to be most interesting. There was an extensive collection of Odd & Curious, Hammered English, Roman Empire, Ancient Greece, Chinese Dynasties, Mystic India, Egypt, and the famous Byzantine Empire.

I was fortunate enough to be allowed into a special room to view a large display of "Proof" coins of the world. This was a special display that had just closed and had not yet been dismantled.

Touring the Timeline in the Numismatic Museum will shows you the exiting history of Aruba, their Economy and Money of the past and the present.



The second room is displayed with showcases forming a timeline. Touring the Timeline in the Numismatic Museum will show you an exiting history of Aruba, their Economy and their Money, both in the past and in the present.

The timeline starts with: Right-Second Room

First display: Spanish colonization:

Around 1499 the Spanish "discovered" the islands. The native Indians, the Caquetio tribe, were living on the island and had their own way of barter. They used tiny buttons made of shell for body decoration such as necklaces and used these beads as a form of exchange. The Spanish introduced their reales (former Spanish currency) in the new world. Coins from other Caribbean islands were also accepted. Danish, British, German and Portuguese currency was common in the Caribbean. The islands in the Caribbean were being colonized by many countries (in Europe) and that is how it became so rich in different languages and cultures.

### Second display: Republic of seven / Batavian Republic

In this display you will see coins from the Dutch Republic of seven (Republic of the united Netherlands), dating back from the 16th century, including the first coins used in the U.S.A. during Dutch colonization of New Amsterdam (New York). See also coins of the Spanish Netherlands and the Austrian Netherlands period, the Batavian Republic and the Napoleonic Kingdom of Holland.

### Third display: The Dutch West Indies Company

This company was established in the early 17th century and became the largest trade company ever to exist. Admire the type of coins they used during this period of trade in the new world accompanied by history markings of Peter Stuyvesant and New Amsterdam (New York)



Left - Gold Peça (6,400 Reis) = 90 real = 11 ¼ pesos  
This golden coin had different denominations according to the era and region/area. "joao", "joe" and "johannis".

### Fourth display: Beginning and midst 19th century

Due to shortage of money in this harsh period the governor gave order to cut the 8 reales in pieces, which were called guillotines (bits). This proved to be very practical and the islands used them for almost a century. In this display you will learn about the law currency of 1854 and the monetary consequences of the abolition of slavery by the Dutch in 1863. Also learn more about the establishment of the Jewish community on the islands and the fact that the Central Bank was established in Curacao.

### Fifth display: 1888 - 1900

With the abolition of slavery the islands the economy changed drastically, slaves kept working for old slave owners but now with payment. The Curacaosche Bank (\*Central Bank 1825) made a list in 1888 with different currencies we could use on the islands. This was a difficult time for the islanders, as they had to calculate from strange currency to Dutch currency. Admire coins from different countries used on the islands in the end of the 19th century including U.S.A, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and much more.

### Sixth display: Beginning of the 20th century: "Colony Curacao"

Two huge monetary changes came in the beginning of the 20th century. The first was a new currency law (1899) that allows the islands to use only Dutch decimal coins, with the guilder as standard currency. The second was the first two coins minted specially for the six islands, melted out of the 8 reales silver coins, bearing the

legend: "Kolonie Curacao". The beginning of a lot changes, including administration of the entire six islands by Curacao. All the profits of the six islands, including Aruba, end up in the "Curacaosche Bank". In the beginning this would not make a difference. Everything changes when the economy in Aruba start growing fast because of the Oil Refinery and later the tourism industry.

#### Sixth - A wall display: Banknotes of Curacaosche Bank (Central Bank)

Admire the evolution of banknotes bearing the legend "Curacaosche Bank". Economic development in Aruba start as early as 1930, the oil refinery bring prosperity and Aruban politicians started to raise in order to achieve more autonomy for Aruba instead of sharing its prosperity with all the other islands. Investing in our own island seemed like a good idea.

#### Seventh display: World War II coins

During the W.W. II Aruba was the largest supplier of aviation fuel for the U.S.A and the Allies. This is the reason why the Germans targeted us. The Dutch royalty and government fled to England while the Germans occupied the Netherlands. During this period our coins were minted in the U.S.A at the Denver and Philadelphia mint. Beautiful historical silver pieces bearing the legend: "Munt van Curacao" (Coin of Curacao).

#### Eight wall display: Banknotes Netherlands Antilles

**In 1954 the Dutch signed for the islands to become: the Netherlands Antilles. This was a new status that reflected an autonomous state within the Kingdom. Now the Banknotes are bearing the legend: Central Bank of the Netherlands Antilles. This did not work for the island of Aruba and it stayed in this position until 1986. This is when the Dutch Kingdom granted Aruba a separate status within the Dutch Kingdom.**

#### Ninth display: coins of the Netherlands Antilles

Here you can admire the first Netherlands Antilles coins and the last ones including some medals and the proof commemorative coins minted for the six islands.

#### Tenth wall display: Netherlands Antilles of five islands

Aruba's separation from the Netherlands Antilles is a consequence of the islands economic evolution and revolution. Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten and St. Eustatius form the new Netherlands Antilles after 1986. In this display you can view the banknotes and coins that they are currently using.

More information?? Ask at the front desk of any hotel or call direct to the museum:

582-8831 or 965-6969  
[info@museumaruba.org](mailto:info@museumaruba.org)

Web site: [www.museumaruba.org](http://www.museumaruba.org)

email:

## **Member Notice Page**

Tom Galway has issued a list of coins from many countries. You may request a copy from GALLERY NUMIS, P.O. Box 620421, Middleton WI 53562.

Tom Galway also is trying to complete his collection of Medieval Coins catalogs issue by Alex Malloy. He needs issues 1-5, 7, 11-14 and 18-21. He has extra copies of issue 15 to trade., and he also has some Ancient Greek and Roman Coins catalog and auction sales to trade. He may be contacted at GALLERY NUMIS, P.O. Box 620421, Middleton WI 53562.

Fred Knust, Box 2. Mason, MI 48854, USA, e-mail: [KNUSTPA@YAHOO.COM](mailto:KNUSTPA@YAHOO.COM)  
For Sale Item: Chinese Contemporary Counterfeit Collection of 96 coppers and base metal coins of the late Empire and early Republic. Consists of counterfeits of the Metropolitan mints as well as issues of the Provincial mints of Anhwei, Chekiang, Chihli, Fukien, Honan, Hunan, Hupeh, Kiangnan, Kiangsu, Kwangtung, Shansi, and Shantung. List available by Krause-Mishler Catalog numbers.

Fred Knust, Box 2. Mason, MI 48854, USA, e-mail: [KNUSTPA@YAHOO.COM](mailto:KNUSTPA@YAHOO.COM)  
For Sale Item: China Republican steel obverse and reverse dies for Hunan Province AE 20 Cash. KM.Y.400.6. XF, slight reddish brown rust. JPEG or photograph available.